

SOME NEW BOOKS.

Morley's Life of Gladstone.

With the possible exception of Mr. Bryce, no living Englishman is so well qualified as Mr. MORLEY to write the life of Gladstone. His sympathy, of liberal ability and of parliamentary and ministerial experience, to produce the long expected biography, now published in three volumes, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone* (Macmillans). No other biographer has had imposed upon him a task so exacting as regards the bulk of the documentary materials that have had to be examined. In the first place, all the papers collected at Hawarden were placed at Mr. Morley's disposal. Besides that, several thousands of letters forthcoming from the legation of Mr. Gladstone's correspondents. He tells us that, on the whole, between two and three hundred thousand written papers of one sort or another have passed under his eye. The diaries from which he often quotes consist of forty little books in double columns, intended to do little more than record persons seen or books read, or letters written by the subject of the biography as the days passed. As regards the spirit in which the work has been composed the author says that he has obeyed because it agreed with his own conception of his duty. The injunction laid upon him by Queen Victoria, that the narrative be not handled in a narrow, partisan way.

In an introduction, Mr. Morley shows himself keenly alive to the tenacity of the attempt to write a life of Mr. Gladstone so soon after the statesman's death. Here, indeed, is the source of the controversy in which the second volume is now so deeply concerned. It is still hot and that which the narrator stands near the events, it is difficult to adjust perspective, scale, and relation. Moreover, not all the particulars, especially with regard to the later stages of Mr. Gladstone's public life, can be disclosed without risk of unjust pain to persons now alive. It is equally obvious that, to defer the task for thirty or forty years, would also, though on other grounds, be objectionable. Indeed, would grow less vivid, truth would become harder to discover, memories would pale and color would fade. If, in one sense, a statesman's contemporaries, even when death has abated the storm and temper of faction, can scarcely judge him, yet, in another sense, who knew at close quarters the problems that faced him, the materials with which he had to work and the limitations of his time, may be the best memorialists. This was an advantage that Thucydides had over Tacitus.

Another question had to be settled by Mr. Morley before he began his narrative. What was to be the scope of his work? Should it be as nearly as possible, exclusively biographical, or should it present, in addition to the subject's life, a history of his time? This is a question with which a biographer is not perplexed in the case of a man of letters. Where, on the other hand, the subject is a man who was four times at the head of the British Government, and who held the office of Prime Minister for a longer time than any other statesman in the reign of Queen Victoria, it is plainly impracticable to tell the story of his work and days without continual and ample reference to the events over which he presided. Mr. Morley does not profess to have overcome successfully the almost insuperable difficulty of fixing in a task like his the precise boundary which should be drawn between history and biography. He warns his readers that a detailed account of Mr. Gladstone's work as theologian and churchman will not be found in these pages. Some may think, consequently, that he has made the preponderance of politics excessive in the story of a man of signal versatility to whom politics was but one interest among many. Touching this possible criticism, the biographer says: "No doubt, speeches, debates, bills, divisions, motions and manœuvres of parties, like the manna that fed the children of Israel in the wilderness, lose their savor and power of nurture on the second day. Yet, after all, it was by his thoughts, his purposes, his ideals, his performances as a statesman, in all the widest significance of that lofty and honorable designation, that Mr. Gladstone owes the lasting substance of his fame." As he himself said, his life was ever "greatly absorbed in working the institutions of his country."

We have seen that Mr. Morley took to heart the Queen's suggestion that he write in no blind spirit of party. It does not follow that there is no trace of bias in this biography. All that is claimed for it is that there is no bias against the truth. Indifferent neutrality, frigidity inessibility in a work penned, as this is, in the spirit of loyal and affectionate remembrance, would be distasteful, discordant and impossible. "I should be," says the biographer, "heartily sorry if there were no signs of partiality and no evidence of prepossession. On the other hand, there is, I trust, no important advocacy or odious assentation. He was great man enough to stand in need of neither. Still less has it been needed, in order to exalt him, to disparage others with whom he came into strong collision. His own funeral orations from time to time on some who were in one degree or another his antagonists proved that this petty and ungenerous method would have been to him of all men most repugnant."

Admiration and sympathy, however, need not exclude discrimination. To pretend that for sixty years Mr. Gladstone averaged in every zone the restlessness of a great nation's shifting and complex politics without many a faulty tack and many a wrong reckoning would indeed be idle. "We are reminded that no such claim is set up by rational men for Pym, Cromwell, Washington or either Pitt. It is not set up for any of the three contemporaries of Mr. Gladstone whose names are bound up with the three most momentous transactions of his age—Cavour, Lincoln and Bismarck. Neither has Mr. Morley acted on the assumption that, in all fields of inquiry or endeavor, Mr. Gladstone's intellect showed itself equally powerful and fruitful. "To suppose," we read, "that in every one of the many subjects touched by him, besides exhibiting the range of his powers and the diversity of his interests, he made abiding contributions to thought and knowledge, is to ignore the jealous conditions under which such contributions came." Mr. Morley submits, however, that to say so much as this is to make but a small deduction from the total of a grand account.

We shall here pass rapidly over the first volume and that part of the second which precedes Mr. Gladstone's first accession to the Premiership, thus covering in the present notice the first thirty-five years of his public life.

With the possible exception of Lord Mansfield, Mr. Gladstone is the most conspicuous and powerful of all the public leaders in Great Britain's history who have sprung from the northern half of the island. Born at Liverpool on Dec. 29, 1809, he was the son of a Scotch merchant who had moved across the border in the latter part of the

eighteenth century. When he had grown to be the most famous man in the British realm, Mr. Gladstone said: "I am not slow to claim the name of Scotsman, and, even if I were, there is the fact staring me in the face that not a drop of blood runs in my veins that is not derived from a Scottish ancestry." By way of illustrating his curious quality of disposition, an opponent once described him as an ardent Italian in the custody of a Scotsman. Mr. Morley thinks that it is easy to make too much of race, but he adds: "When we are puzzled by Mr. Gladstone's seeming contrarieties of temperament, his union of impulse with caution, of passion with circumspection, of pride and fire with self-control, of Ossianic flight with a steady foothold on the solid earth, we may, perhaps, find a sort of explanation in thinking of him as a Highlander in the custody of a Lowlander."

To understand Gladstone, it is important to bear in mind not only that he was a Scotsman, but also that he was brought up in a household of strong Tory predilection. "I was bred," said Mr. Gladstone, when rising to meridian splendor, "under the shadow of the great name of Canning; every influence connected with that name governed the politics of my childhood and of my youth, with Canning I rejoiced in the removal of religious disabilities and in the character which he gave to our policy abroad, with Canning I rejoiced in the opening which he made toward the establishment of free commercial interchanges between nations; with Canning, and under the shadow of the yet more venerable name of Burke, my youthful mind and imagination were impressed." By the authority of the same names, Mr. Gladstone might have consoled himself for the fact that when a countryman of his was elected to the House of Commons he had opposed the emancipation of slaves in the British colonies. It is certain that on slavery and even the slave trade Burke had argued against total abolition. Canning in 1833 laid down the principle that amelioration of the lot of the negro slave was the utmost limit of action, and that his freedom, as a result of amelioration, was the object of a pious hope, and no more. Canning described the negro as being with the form of a man and the intellect of a child. He goes on to use words that express the convictions of many Americans who have marked the results of the indiscriminate bestowal of the franchise on the negro by the framers of our Reconstruction legislation. "To turn him loose," said Canning, "in the manhood of his physical strength, in the maturity of his physical passions, but in the infancy of his untrained reason, would be to raise up a creature resembling the splendid devil of a recent romance (Frankenstein), the hero of which constructs a human form with all the corporate capabilities of a man, but being unable to impart to the work of his hands a perception of right and wrong, he finds to his cost that he has only created a more mortal power of doing mischief."

Like Canning, Gladstone was sent to Eton. He entered the school in his twelfth year and left it at the age of eighteen. His attachment for Eton grew with the lapse of years to him it was ever "the queen of all schools." "When I was at Eton," he said long afterward, "we knew very little indeed, but we knew it accurately. In mathematics he did not go far, but his subsequent career at the university shows that he must have been well grounded in algebra and geometry as well as in the classics. Probably, as his biographer suggests, it was less by school work, or spoken addresses in juvenile debate, or by early attempts in the difficult art of written composition, than by blithe and congenial comradeship, that at Eton the mind of the young Gladstone was stimulated, opened and strengthened."

Again, like Canning, Gladstone proceeded from Eton to Christ Church College, Oxford, which at that time was at the top of the academic fame. Christ Church was then almost as conspicuous in the class lists as Balliol College was to be afterward. For a year and a half the young man took his college course pretty easily, but in 1830 his really hard work began, and, ultimately, like Sir Robert Peel, he took a "double first," that is to say, a first class in classics and also in mathematics. He twice competed unsuccessfully for the Ireland scholarship, conferred for special proficiency in Greek, and twice, but failed, to secure the Newdigate prize for a poem. It is well known that he was active in the debates in the Union Debating Society, and in May, 1831, made a speech there against Parliamentary reform that struck all his hearers with amazement, so powerful and splendid did it seem in their youthful eyes. Two generations after he had quitted the university, Mr. Gladstone summed up his influence upon him in the following words: "Oxford had rather tended to hide from me the great fact that liberty is a great and glorious gift of God, and that human excellence cannot grow up in a vacuum without it. Yet I do not hesitate to say that Oxford even at this time had laid the foundations of my liberalism; school pursuits had revealed little, but in the region of philosophy she had initiated, if not inspired me to the pursuit of truth as an end of study. * * * I declare that, while in the arms of Oxford, I was possessed through and through with a single-minded and passionate love of truth, with a virgin love of truth, so that, although I might be swayed in clouds of prejudice, there was something of an eye within that might gradually pierce them."

It was the memorable anti-reform speech at the Oxford Union that caused the Duke of Newcastle to inform Gladstone, then not 23 years old, that his influence in the borough of Newark was at the young man's disposal, should he desire to enter Parliamentary life. The Duke also offered a handsome contribution toward expenses, not asked for no pledges from his protégé. After a brief correspondence with his father, Gladstone issued an address to the electors of Newark in August, 1832, and, after a hot contest, was returned in December of that year. It appears that his election expenses exceeded £2,000. He never forgot his disgust at what he deemed the improper use of money on this occasion, and of all the measures that he was destined in later days to place upon the statute book, none was more salutary than the law leveled at corrupt practices at elections. He took his seat at the opening of the Reformed House of Commons in 1833, and almost simultaneously entered at Lincoln's Inn, where he dined in hall pretty frequently, down to 1839. He kept thirteen terms, but was never called to the bar.

Mr. Gladstone first opened his lips in Parliament on April 30, 1833, when a petition from Newark was presented, and on June 3 he spoke at considerable length against the Government's proposals for the gradual abolition of colonial slavery. The speech was uncommonly successful. The bill had been introduced by Stanley, afterward Lord Derby, the "Rupert of debate," who said of the young man who had attacked him, "I never listened to any speech with greater pleasure." King William IV. also wrote to Althorp that he "rejoiced to hear that a young member had come forward so promising a manner as Viscount Althorp." Mr. W. E. Gladstone to have done. It is, of course, well understood that young Gladstone entered Parliament

as a Tory of the Tories. In 1833, not only did he oppose the abolition of slavery, but he voted for the worst clauses of the Irish Coercion bill of that year, and fought against the admission of Jews to Parliament. He also resisted the admission of Dissenters to the Universities, which he described as seminaries for the Established Church. He supported the existing corn laws. He opposed a motion for the abolition of military and naval sinecures and another motion for the abolition of flogging in the army, except for mutiny and drunkenness. He voted against the ballot, a reform that was to be carried by his own Government forty years later.

Gladstone was not quite 25 years old when, in December, 1834, Sir Robert Peel, having been invited to form a Government, made him one of the Lords of the Treasury. This appointment was noted at the time as an innovation upon a semi-sacred social usage. Sir Robert Inglis said to him, "You are about the youngest lord who has ever placed at the Treasury on his own account, and not because he was his father's son." Within about a month he was promoted to be Under-Secretary for the Colonies. Lord Aberdeen being at the head of the Colonial Office, Mr. Gladstone's first glimpse of official power and responsibility was but momentary, for in April, 1835, Sir Robert Peel resigned. Of his Parliamentary career during the following six years two incidents deserve commemoration. In 1837 Sir William Molesworth had been invited to come forward as candidate for Leeds. A report spread that Sir William was not a believer in the Christian religion, and that he had been expelled from Molesworth to know if this were true. He answered that the question whether he was a believer in the Christian religion was one that no man of liberal principles should propose to another, or could propose without being guilty of a dereliction of duty. Touching this incident Mr. Gladstone said that he would ask: "Is it not a time for serious reflection among moderate and candid men of all parties, when such a question was actually thought impertinent interference? Surely they would say that the question, who have no belief in the divine revelation are not the men to govern the nation, be they Whigs or Radicals." The biographer's comment on the young man's exhibition of intolerance is: "Long, extraordinary, and not inglorious, was the ascent from such a position as this to the principles so nobly vindicated in the speech on the Affirmation bill in 1833."

In the Ministry formed by Sir Robert Peel in August, 1834, Mr. Gladstone was invited to take the post of Vice-President of the Board of Trade. About two and a half years previously he had brought out the book on "Church and State," which caused Macaulay to describe him in the *Edinburgh Review* as the rising hope of the stern and unbending Tories. Lockhart said of him that, though a hazy writer, Gladstone had shown himself a considerable divine, and it was a pity that he had entered Parliament instead of taking orders. Sir Robert Peel asked impatiently why anybody with so fine a career before him should go out of his way to write books. The young man made no converts in theory, and was pretty promptly cast aside in practice. The fourth edition fell flat.

In after years Mr. Gladstone said of his qualifications for the office of Vice-President of the Board of Trade: "I was totally ignorant, both of political economy and of the commerce of the country. I might have said, as I believe was said by a former holder of the vice-presidency, that my mind was, in regard to all these matters, 'a sheet of white paper,' except that it was doubtless colored by a traditional prejudice in favor of protection, which had then quite recently become a distinctive mark of conservatism." Gladstone's assumption of the post, however, was followed by hard, steady and honest work, and as he himself said afterward, "every day so spent beat like a battering ram on the unsure fabric of my official protectionism. By the end of the year I was far gone in the opposite sense."

It was largely upon Mr. Gladstone that the burden of framing and passing the tariff of 1842 fell—he spoke 120 times during the session—and it was evident that his admission to the Cabinet could not be long deferred. In the spring of the following year he was promoted from the vice-presidency to the presidency of the Board of Trade, and a seat in the Cabinet was given him. He was not yet 34 years old, and had been only a little more than a decade in Parliamentary life. Canning was 37 before he gained the same eminence, and had been thirteen years in the House. It is well known that in February, 1845, Mr. Gladstone resigned from the Peel Cabinet because he did not approve of the Premier's plan to increase the grant of public money to the Maynooth Seminary for the training of Catholic priests.

The popular verdict on his resignation was that the act was a piece of political prudery. A journalistic wag observed that Gladstone vacated his seat at Newcastle and went to the Continent, "to get a Western turn, going forty miles an hour, merely to pick up a bit. Pretty much like this act, so disproportionate to the occasion, is Mr. Gladstone's leap out of the Ministry to follow his book," because the principles advocated in "Church and State" were irreconcilable with the proposed grant to Maynooth Seminary. In December, 1845, however, Mr. Gladstone reentered the Peel Cabinet as Secretary for the Colonies. Of course, the acceptance of office vacated his seat at Newcastle, and Mr. Gladstone declined to offer himself again as a candidate for that borough, having alienated the Duke of Newcastle by his desertion. The Duke called it betrayal of the Protectionist cause. After trying in vain to get a seat elsewhere, Mr. Gladstone remained from December, 1845, until the resignation of the Peel Government in July, 1846, a Minister of the Crown, without a seat in Parliament. In our own day such a state of things would be looked upon as a public inconvenience and a political anomaly too glaring to be tolerated. We scarcely need point out that Mr. Gladstone, not being at the time a member of the House of Commons, took no part in the historic debates on the repeal of the Corn laws in 1846.

It will be remembered that, after the Corn laws had been repealed, Sir Robert Peel was beaten on an Irish coercion bill by what Wellington called a "blackguard combination" between the Whigs and the Protectionists. He resigned, and Lord John Russell, at the head of the Whigs, came in. Mr. Gladstone was without a seat in Parliament until the dissolution in June, 1847, when he was returned for the University of Oxford, and continued to represent that constituency for eighteen years. It is curious to find him in 1847 supported by Dr. Pusey on the one hand, and by Arthur Stanley and Jowett on the other. The men of the old school, who looked on Oxford as the ancient and peculiar inheritance of the Church, were zealous for him; the new school, who deemed the university an organ, not of the Church, but of the nation, eagerly took him for their champion.

The first of Mr. Morley's three volumes is divided into four books. In the third chapter of the third book, he discusses

the complications which followed the fall of Peel and the break-up of the Tory party in July, 1846. When Lord John Russell was forming his Government, he sought Peel to include in his Government the members of the latter's party. Peel thought such a junction under existing circumstances undesirable, but said he should have no ground of complaint if Lord John made offers to any of his friends, and he should not attempt to influence them either way. The action ended in a proposal of office to Dalhousie, Lincoln and Sidney Herbert. Nothing came of it, and the Whigs were left to go on as best they could upon the narrow base of their own party. The Protectionists, however, gave them to understand that, before Lord George Bentinck, Disraeli and their friends had made up their minds to turn Peel out, they had decided that it would not be fair to put the Whigs in merely to punish the betrayer and then to turn round upon them. On the contrary, fair and candid support was, they said, what they intended. So it came to pass that, whereas Sir Robert Peel's Conservative Government had been a Liberal Government, Lord Russell's Liberal Government now subsisted on Conservative declarations.

The Peelite, according to a memorandum of Mr. Gladstone's, from a number approaching 130 in the Corn laws crisis of 1846 were reduced at once by the general election of 1847 to less than half. The resultant number, added to the Liberal force, gave free trade a large majority; added to the Protectionists, it would have just reached the balance in their favor. So long as Sir Robert Peel lived—he died July 2, 1850—the entire body of Peelites never voted with the Protectionists. From the first, however, a division arose among Peel's adherents that widened as time went on, and led to a long series of doubts, perplexities and manœuvres that lasted down to 1859, and constitute a pivotal chapter in Mr. Gladstone's political story. Many of those who had stood by Peel's side in the day of battle, and who still stood by him on the morrow, when his policy was combined with personal defense, were in more or less latent sympathy with the several Protectionists in everything except protection. Among these were such men as Lord Stanhope, Lord Harding, Gen. Peel, Mr. Corry and Mr. Wilson Patten, most of whom, in days to come, took their places in Conservative Administrations. Others, again, of the Peelite, Mr. Gladstone has himself recorded, "whose opinions were more akin to those of the Liberals, cherished, however, less personal sympathies, and lingering about the personal defense, were in more or less latent sympathy with the several Protectionists in everything except protection. Among these were such men as Lord Stanhope, Lord Harding, Gen. Peel, Mr. Corry and Mr. Wilson Patten, most of whom, in days to come, took their places in Conservative Administrations. Others, again, of the Peelite, Mr. Gladstone has himself recorded, "whose opinions were more akin to those of the Liberals, cherished, however, less personal sympathies, and lingering about the personal defense, were in more or less latent sympathy with the several Protectionists in everything except protection. 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